HEALTH

Bone Health

Bones play many roles in the body. They provide structure, protect organs, anchor muscles, and store calcium. Adequate calcium consumption and weight bearing physical activity builds strong bones, optimizes bone mass, and may reduce the risk of osteoporosis later in life.

Peak Bone Mass

Peak bone mass refers to the genetic potential for bone density. By the age of 20, the average woman has acquired most of her skeletal mass. A large decline in bone mass occurs in older adults, increasing the risk of osteoporosis. For women this occurs around the time of menopause. It is important for young girls to reach their peak bone mass in order to maintain bone health throughout life. A person with high bone mass as a young adult will be more likely to have a higher bone mass later in life. Inadequate calcium consumption and physical activity early on could result in a failure to achieve peak bone mass in adulthood.

Osteoporosis

Osteoporosis or "porous bone" is a disease of the skeletal system characterized by low bone mass and deterioration of bone tissue. Osteoporosis leads to an increase risk of bone fractures typically in the wrist, hip, and spine.

While men and women of all ages and ethnicities can develop osteoporosis, some of the risk factors for osteoporosis include those who are:

- Female
- White/Caucasian
- Postmenopausal women
- Older adults
- Small in body size
- Eating a diet low in calcium
- Physically inactive

Calcium

Calcium is a mineral needed by the body for healthy bones, teeth, and proper function of the heart, muscles, and nerves. The body cannot produce calcium; therefore, it must be absorbed through food. Good sources of calcium include:

- Dairy products—*low fat or nonfat milk, cheese, and yogurt*
- Dark green leafy vegetables—*bok choy and broccoli*
- Calcium fortified foods—*orange juice, cereal, bread, soy beverages, and tofu products*
- Nuts—*almonds*

For more information on bone health and osteoporosis please visit the National Osteoporosis Foundation online at http://www.nof.org/

The State Health Plan PREVENTION PARTNERS
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